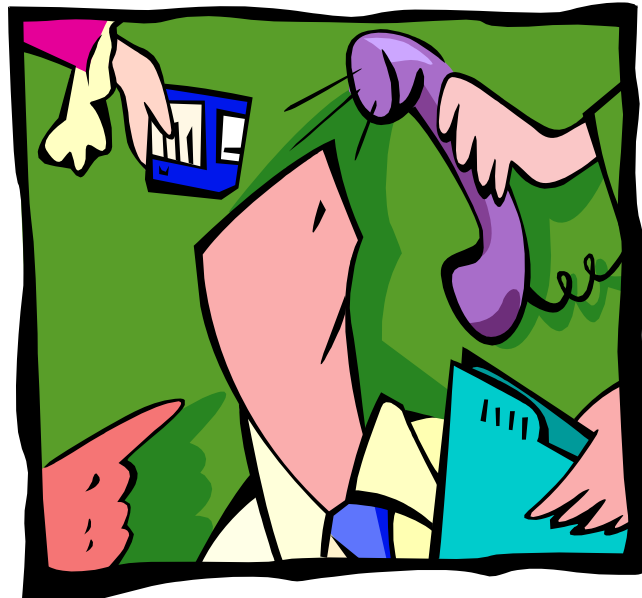


# 100+ Time Management Tips for Busy Professionals

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**Revised 2007**

## Introduction

If you ever wish there were more than 24 hours in a day, rest assured that you're not alone. Most of us are running at warp speed while trying to juggle the demands of work and family. We live in an age where dual income families and single parent homes are more common than the deliriously happy single income sitcom families we grew up watching on television- a standard we should all just try to forget.

It's no longer realistic to seek perfection in life. If you strive to keep a perfect home, work full time, commute, put a fresh, hot dinner on the table and spend quality time with your family every day, you are likely to spontaneously combust. If there is one thing that can be learned from quality time management, it is that you need to *let some things go*. So your house isn't always dust free and your recycling bin is overflowing; will the earth stop its rotation because of it? In the grand scheme of things, does a perfect home really equal a perfect life? As long as you are making time for what is really important in your life- and you will define those things after reading this book- then you can consider yourself a success.

We must work to live, not live to work and we owe it to ourselves to appreciate what it is we work so hard for. Your big house with the three car garage may seem like a haven to an outsider, but if you have to work 80 hours each week to afford it and end up missing out on quality time with your family- and yourself- is it really worth it?

Do you know someone who is constantly on the go yet they somehow manage to accomplish an incredible number of tasks each day and make it look effortless? Do you ache to find more hours in the day? The good news is that you can make better use of your time and become more productive by simply modifying some of your behaviors.

You are about to read over 100 ideas for managing your time. By integrating even just a few of these ideas into your daily routine, you should see results right away. Just remember to pace yourself. Don't view this as another checklist of things you must do, but begin to

incorporate the ideas that fit your lifestyle the best. Make it fun. Try the suggestions and see how they work for you. Then modify them to fit your needs and reap the rewards of your newly organized lifestyle. And remember that those television sitcoms are fiction. None of us really live a perfect existence and striving for that image will do nothing but leave you feeling deflated and even more frustrated at the end of the day.

You might want to keep a highlighter handy while you read through the suggestions in this book. Use it to manage your reading time and keep track of the tips that you want to start using right away.

## Office Time Savers

- 1) **Turn your email off.** It may be hard to break away from your constant communication with the world, but if you check email twice per day instead, you will be amazed by how much time you save. Specify specific time frames during the day that you will devote to email and stick to your schedule.

One Silicon Valley company recently implemented a *No Email* rule on Fridays. If you need a question answered, you have to pick up the phone or walk over to the person with the answer. While this may not always be the most productive solution, it drives home the point that we rely too heavily on email for our communication. When you stop letting it rule your life, your productivity will ultimately increase.

- 2) **Delete all junk messages** and anything you don't need to read again- and do it *immediately*. Avoid just clicking around the junk in your inbox and instead get rid of it when it arrives.
- 3) **Create email filters** to send junk mail directly to the trash bin. With the latest version of Microsoft Outlook, you can right click on a junk message and add the sender to your Blocked Senders list, preventing any future messages from that sender from landing in your Inbox.
- 4) **Create folders to sort and organize your email messages.** Make a list of the folders that will help you get organized and sort your mail to the appropriate folder every day. If you are using Microsoft Outlook, here's how:
  - Click on **View > Folder List** to display your email folder list on the left side of your screen.
  - Click on **Inbox** in the folder list, then go to the menu at the top and select **File > New > Folder**
  - Give the folder a name and press **Enter**.

- Now you can drag and drop email messages to that folder. Repeat steps to create as many folders as you need to get organized.
- 5) **Create special folders to automatically sort incoming mail.** For example, all messages from your best client should be routed to your *Priority* folder. Then when you check your email, you know to check that folder first. For Microsoft Outlook:
- Create a special mail folder, for example, “Priority”.
  - Right click on an existing message from the selected individual to display a menu of options.
  - Select **Create Rule**.
  - Choose the appropriate options in the dialog box to route the messages to your selected folder.
- 6) **Get caller ID.** How much time do you spend each day answering calls that aren’t urgent? Let caller ID help you decide when to answer your phone. Don’t recognize the number? Send it to voice mail. Is it a friend who will keep you on the phone for 30 minutes? Send it to voice mail.
- 7) **Better yet, let *all* of your calls go to voice mail** and return them when it is convenient for you. Do you drop everything when the phone rings? How often is it really critical that you answer the phone? By sending your calls to voice mail, you allow yourself time to prepare your responses to important questions. The fact is that if it’s important, the caller will leave a message.
- 8) **Set up special ring tones on your phone.** Most of the newer model phones allow you to set a different ring tone for phone numbers in your speed dial directory. You can use this to help you recognize when your spouse, child, boss or best client is calling. This is a great system for both at home and at the office.

- 9) **Return calls from your car.** Use your cell phone- with the headset- to return calls while you're driving home, sitting in traffic or on your way to a meeting. Not only is this a good use of commute time, but it sets a finite amount of time that you are available to talk.
- 10) **Reduce office chat.** How much time is wasted each day by gossiping with your neighbor or chatting about the latest reality show du jour? Friendly conversation can be nice but it's also a distraction that adds up when you stop for 5 minutes here and 10 minutes there. You can politely cut a conversation short by saying with a smile, "I have to get back to work if I ever want to make it home for dinner tonight!"
- 11) **Minimize subscriptions to mailing lists, groups and organizations.** It's easy to let subscriptions add up and then you later discover that you don't really need that daily digest of recipes, baseball scores or business news. Take a moment to unsubscribe from lists that don't offer you any value and just suck up valuable time. You could also use email filters to route some of these subscriptions to a special folder to read when you have some free time.
- 12) **Take an inventory of where you time is going.** Spend a few days jotting down how you spend your time throughout each day- 40 minutes on email, 25 minutes chatting with a coworker, 30 minutes for lunch, 2 hours fixing a problem, another 45 minutes with email, etc. This should paint a picture of where you are losing valuable time in the day.
- 13) **Don't accept projects that don't get you toward your ultimate goals.** It may sound like fun to organize birthday lunches or office parties, but if it takes up time that you don't have to spare, let someone else organize Bob's birthday extravaganza. Learn how to say "No" or, "I'm just too busy right now. Can you ask Janet to handle that?"
- 14) **Clear the clutter from your desk.** When your workspace is disorganized it can cause you to feel overwhelmed before your day has even begun. You also shouldn't have to search for the documents you need or the report you started working on a few days ago that is now buried under three other projects. Use file folders and a desktop organizer to

keep projects separate and easy to access. An organized workspace will free up your mind and your time.

15) **Print the filename and path on your documents so that they are easy to locate later.** If you generate a lot of documents and often find it difficult to refer back to them later, adding a file name to the bottom of each document could save you time later. To do this with Microsoft Word:

- ◆ From the menu, select **View > Header and Footer**
- ◆ Click in the footer area and select **Insert Auto Text**
- ◆ Select **Filename and Path**

16) **Use the Search function to quickly locate files on your computer.** If you need to locate a file but can't recall exactly where it's stored or its exact name, instead of desperately searching through folders, run a search to locate it quickly. To do this with Microsoft XP:

- ◆ Click **Start > Search > Files or Folders**
- ◆ Select **Documents**
- ◆ Type in a key word from your document title and click **Search**. The system will generate a list of documents that match your keyword. Double click on any of the documents to open.

17) **Stop blogging!** Online blogs are essentially journals about everything from news and sports to fashion and humor, and the popularity of these diaries continues to grow. Whether you are reading or writing blogs each day, consider if it's really worth your time. If you still need your daily fix, then allot a small amount of time in your schedule and stick to it.

- 18) **Get rid of your instant messenger.** Instant messages allow you to communicate with online buddies or coworkers quickly. The pop up windows interrupt whatever you're working on and they are difficult to ignore. Some companies have employees use these for communication, but in most cases, they become another form of office chatter and end up reducing productivity instead of increasing it. If you must use an instant messenger, designate a time during the day, perhaps while you are checking email, to turn it on.
- 19) **Hide out.** If constant interruptions are sabotaging your productivity, find another location to work. If you're in an office, try a conference room. If you're at home, lock the door or go to the library, just do what you can to avoid the aggravation and the hassle of interruptions.
- 20) **Make use of travel time.** If you have to travel, the long hours at the airport and on the plane create a lot of time to either catch up on tasks or schedule time for yourself to read for pleasure. Just as you plan what you need to pack, plan on how you will use this time. If you need to work on a presentation, make sure to bring a back up battery for your laptop. If you want to catch up on some reports, pack them in your carry-on bag along with highlighters or other implements you need to make the time productive. Do you just want to read and relax? Make sure to bring enough reading material to last the duration. Traveling can be unpredictable and you could find yourself on a layover or stuck for hours longer than anticipated. Make sure you have a plan to make use of this time and your travel experience will be much more pleasurable.
- 21) **Hire a Virtual Assistant to handle administrative tasks.** VAs are remote office administrators who can handle tasks including large mailings, contact management and other office duties. They can be hired for a simple project or on an ongoing basis. To find a VA, visit <http://www.IVAA.org>.
- 22) **Manage interruptions from coworkers.** If other people in your office demand much of your time each day, set specific time for meetings with employees or coworkers

and publish this schedule, then have them sign up for a meeting time. This lets everyone know that your time is valuable yet you are still available.

- 23) **Use a working lunch wisely.** It's easy to work through lunch, but instead of skipping lunch altogether, make this a productive time by scheduling meetings with employees or clients along with a meal. You can easily order in sandwiches for a working lunch or treat a client to lunch and add valuable "face time" with your important customers.
- 24) **Make everyone more efficient.** You're probably not the only one in your office struggling to make the most of your time. Get your colleagues together to brain storm how you can all work more efficiently. Putting several heads together could yield some fantastic results.
- 25) **Manage your contacts.** If you maintain a large list of people in your network, use contact management software or the contact management provided by Microsoft Outlook to create mailing lists, remember important birthdays or make notes about your interactions with clients to remember when you meet with them next time.
- 26) **Define your overall objectives for your work.** Is it to work on tasks that generate revenue? Then face each new task and decide whether it is going to get you closer to your goal. If not, determine if you can hand it over to someone else or skip it altogether.
- 27) **Praise the people around you for a job well done to encourage efficiency.** You will benefit even more if your family and coworkers also learn to better manage their time. Recognizing these efforts creates positive reinforcement that everyone can appreciate.
- 28) **Get in the habit of using a To Do list every day.** At the end of each day, make a list of items to complete the following day. This helps you put closure on the day so you don't leave worried about forgetting the tasks that await you tomorrow.

29) **Prioritize your To Do items.** Get the urgent tasks and items you dread done first so you can breeze through the rest of the day. Be sure to cross them off as you complete them. Not only does this help paint a picture of you how much you have left to finish in a day, but it also gives you a sense of accomplishment.

30) **Devise a system to evaluate the urgency of tasks.** Many people find it difficult to prioritize tasks and end up struggling needlessly to complete projects in a timely manner. If you have many tasks to complete each day and need help evaluating their importance, devise your own system for prioritizing your work. For example:

- Priority 1 - Tasks that must be completed in a matter of hours.
- Priority 2 - Tasks that need to be completed by end of day
- Priority 3 - Tasks that need to be completed the following day.
- Priority 4 - Tasks that need to be completed by the end of the week.
- Priority 5 – Tasks that aren't urgent but should be completed eventually.

Develop a similar system like the one shown above and assign your priorities each day to your To Do list.

31) **Capitalize on your energy levels.** When do you have the most energy? In the morning, after lunch or late afternoon? Identify when you are most productive and tackle your biggest and most important projects when your energy is in high-gear.

32) **Keep snacks handy.** Do you suffer from the mid-afternoon groggies? Instead of downing another cup of java, reach for a pack of peanuts, a granola bar or a piece of fruit. Not only will a small and healthy snack kick your metabolism into gear, it will boost your energy until dinner time.

33) **Avoid juggling multiple projects at once.** While multi-tasking can be effective in certain situations, don't try to multi-task on several tasks at once. Stopping and starting

several different projects causes you to lose focus and makes your day feel more chaotic. Get to a point where you are officially finished with one task before you move on to the next.

- 34) **Manage your meetings.** Set expectations when beginning a meeting by announcing a cut-off time. You could say something like, “I know you’re busy too and I have another meeting at 3:00 so let’s plan to wrap this up by 2:45.” This not only keeps your schedule on track, but busy attendees will appreciate it as well. Keep an eye on the clock and stick to the time you have allotted.
- 35) **Make your meetings more efficient.** Hold effective meetings by setting an agenda and sticking to it. If you can’t come up with an agenda, then you probably don’t have a reason to hold a meeting.
- 36) **Keep your meetings small.** Limit the number of attendees at a meeting to minimize the excess discussion time.
- 37) **Get some training.** If you are struggling to use a software program or tool that you don’t understand and you’re spending too much time fighting with it, take time out for training. If you can’t make time for an actual class, take the online tutorial or read the online Help guide or the product manual. If that doesn’t work, consider scheduling some time with a coworker who is an expert. The frustration of struggling with an application can ruin your day and take time away from other demands. Find a way to solve the problem swiftly.
- 38) **Stop repeating yourself.** Do you spend too much time training other people or explaining processes? It’s probably time for a training manual or procedures manual. Delegate this task if you can, or invest your own time to create this valuable resource that can be used over and over again. It may be an initial investment in time, but could save you time and headaches in the long run. Procedures manuals are also appreciated by workers who can refer to them when needed, allowing them to be more self-sufficient.

- 39) **Never leave your desk empty handed.** Need to drop off items in the mail bin? Or put something away? Grab the items on your way out to a meeting or lunch and drop them where they need to go. Get in the habit of keeping things moving whenever you need to leave your desk.
- 40) **Make the most of conference calls.** If you can't avoid conference calls where there is little need for your participation, mute the phone and get to work on some light filing or something that allows you to keep one ear on what's being said.
- 41) **Make an outline for your presentations or big projects.** We are taught in grade school to use an outline to organize our thoughts when writing a paper. While it may seem like an extra step that will require even more time, creating an outline gives your project some direction and should actually minimize the amount of time you struggle with developing the entire project.
- 42) **Use Post-it notes to organize your thoughts.** If you are struggling to organize an outline in proper order, write each topic heading on a Post-it note and spread the notes out on a big white board. Move the topics around until you find the right flow. These sticky little wonders can help get your project on track, freeing up time to develop the project effortlessly.
- 43) **Evaluate your routine.** Do you spend the day jumping from task to task? Group tasks together. Set a time to file, organize, return phone calls, etc.
- 44) **Use stacking files to organize your projects.** Create an inbox, an outbox and use extra boxes to sort out specific projects.
- 45) **Get your filing system in order.** Do you waste time looking for invoices or receipts? Create a file folder for receipts each month and simply drop your papers into each corresponding folder. This can also be useful later on when you have a question about a credit card expense from January. Simply pull out your January folder and voila- you have your information at your fingertips!

- 46) **Use pre-printed lists for supplies, groceries, etc.** Make a list of the office supplies that you use regularly and post one on a bulletin board near your desk. Simply check off the supplies you need when you run low so you remember what you need to reorder. This system works well for groceries and household supplies too. Get your family in the habit of checking off items that are running low so you never again forget to pick something up at the grocery store.
- 47) **Minimize trips to the office supply store by having your orders delivered.** Most orders of \$50 or more will be shipped in 24 hours for free. What if you don't need \$50 worth of supplies? Check your stock of expensive items such as printer cartridges, blank CDs or copy paper. Will you need to reorder any of these items soon? Add them to your list now to save on the shipping fee.
- 48) **Catch up on paperwork while watching TV at night.** You can enjoy time with your family or catch the evening news while sorting or reading through paperwork during commercials. Use this time to pay bills, sign homework forms or attend to business matters.
- 49) **Hire someone to do it for you.** How much is your time worth? Do you make \$20, \$50 or \$100 per hour? Consider hiring someone who costs less per hour to handle the chores that are consuming your time. You can hire a house or office cleaner, an assistant to handle paperwork, a student to make calls, a website designer, etc.

One New York based Bed and Breakfast was featured on the TLC channel's popular show "Taking Care of Business." The owner was practically a one woman show. She answered the phones, took reservations, checked in guests, cleaned the rooms, did the laundry and by the end of the day, she was completely wiped out. Though money was tight and her business was struggling, she was advised to hire help, freeing up her time to focus on running and marketing her business.

She ultimately hired a cleaning service to maintain the rooms and now sends the laundry out. Though it was an expensive investment, it ultimately made her business more productive because the owner had more time and energy to focus on revenue generating

tasks. The end result? Occupancy rates have since increased rapidly and the fate of the business looks hopeful for the first time in four years. It may be difficult to consider investing in help, but if done the right way, that help could ultimately result in added profits.

- 50) **Use the barter system.** If you can't afford to hire someone to help out, consider bartering or trading services. You could offer a website designer some free products or services in exchange for design services or trade babysitting duties with a trust worthy neighbor.
- 51) **Manage your calendar.** Get in the habit of using the Calendar function offered by Microsoft Outlook. The calendar not only allows you to manage your appointments, but will send you reminders for appointments, birthdays, etc. You can even use it to remind yourself of regular tasks such as watering the plants, backing up your computer or taking out the trash.
- 52) **Avoid being a perfectionist.** There are certain projects that require extra effort such as a presentation for a customer or the boss. But if you're pressed for time, some projects can be done to the best of your ability without fretting over the details. Remember your priorities and if this project isn't high on the list, just do your best and let it go.
- 53) **Delegate tasks.** Tackle a big project by breaking it down into small pieces then outline a plan and delegate tasks whenever possible. Also evaluate any tasks that you currently handle that you could hand off elsewhere and get them off of your To Do list.
- 54) **Get organized.** Use baskets or plastic bins to organize office supplies, stray business cards, pens, and anything that is causing clutter or reducing your productivity. Professional organizers advise that you need to make sure everything has a place. Designate a place for all your office clutter and make it easy to put it away and find it when you need it.
- 55) **Negotiate deadlines when feasible.** We often place urgency on tasks when it may not be necessary. If your boss asks for a report by the end of the day but your schedule is

full, explain the situation and request a later due date. You might just break your boss's habit of making everything he asks a priority. Your boss isn't the only one to consider here. Do you rush everything for your clients? Why not ask if you can get back to them by Friday instead of the same day? Your client may not be in any hurry at all and the worst part will be that you will discover you've put a rush on everything for too long.

- 56) **Evaluate all the tasks you complete each day and ask yourself *why*?** Is every single report or task really important or is it simply something that you have done for a long time but may no longer be necessary? Does anyone actually read your daily report or could you instead produce a weekly or monthly version? Question all tasks.
- 57) **Don't get sidetracked by tasks that come up throughout the day.** Instead of dropping what you're already working on, add the new task to your To Do list and finish what you started. It's easy to shift gears and drop everything, but remember your priorities and try not to move to another task until you've completed the one you've started.
- 58) **Use templates for repeat projects.** Do you have a daily, weekly or monthly report to write? Do you spend time calculating figures manually that could be done easily in a spreadsheet? Create templates to reuse over and over again and minimize your prep time.

## Family Time Savers

- 59) **Double up on dinner.** Has dinner time become another frustration for you? Whenever you make a meal, double the recipe and freeze half of it for a quick meal the following week.
- 60) **Freeze leftovers.** If you have a serving or two left of tonight's dinner and you know nobody will want it tomorrow, put it in a freezer safe container and save it for lunch or a quick dinner option in the upcoming weeks.
- 61) **Establish quick dinner solutions.** Keep quick and healthy meal choices on hand for those nights when cooking seems out of the question. Try soups, salads, frozen dinners, sandwich fixings, meat for the grill and jars of pasta sauce. When you make garlic bread, freeze the leftovers and pull out a few slices as needed, broil for a few minutes and serve along side some pasta or barbecued meat.
- 62) **Multi-task when you are on the phone at home.** Have a weekly gab session with your mother? Do you spend an hour catching up with your best pal or sister? Fold laundry, dust or straighten up the kitchen while you chat.
- 63) **Invest in an inexpensive head set for your home phone.** Most of us own a cordless phone by now and most of these can be clipped on to your belt with a \$10 headset plugged in for hands free talk time. This makes it easy to multi-task while talking.
- 64) **Designate a daily chore to everyone in your family.** In previous generations, most kids worked for a living! Break your kids away from the video games for twenty minutes to help with garbage duty, dishes, vacuuming or taking care of the pets. Delegating one chore to everyone daily will lighten your load and keep your home organized and clean. You can even make a list or spreadsheet and rotate the chores or make it fun by offering a reward after everyone finishes.

- 65) **Get your house in order.** If you have items in your house that are in a constant state of chaos, spend a day to get organized. Designate a box for gift wrapping supplies, another container for spare batteries, another for nails and tacks, and so on. Give your kids bins for toys, shelves for books and use inexpensive closet organizers to keep everything neat and accessible. Drawer organizers can make even the chaotic kitchen drawer neat and tidy.
- 66) **Set up mailboxes in your house for each person.** When you bring in the mail, sort it immediately into each person's designated basket or container.
- 67) **Manage annual appointments.** Set reminders in your calendar to schedule doctor and dentist visits for you and your family. Map out your schedule early in the year so you'll be sure to make all of your important visits. Don't forget to include your trip to the optometrist if you wear glasses and your insurance allows for a "free" pair each year.
- 68) **Manage your snail mail.** Put your incoming mail at home and at work in a basket and check it every few days. Most mail doesn't need to be opened immediately. Throw away all junk mail as soon as it arrives.
- 69) **Write it down.** Keep a small spiral notebook and pen in your car, briefcase or purse. Divide it into sections to keep lists of things you need to do for home, for work, and for the kids. When you think of a task or item you need to pick up, jot it down immediately. Get in the habit of using your notebook to keep yourself organized. Writing things down also gets them off your mind, freeing up your thought for more relaxing pursuits.
- 70) **Have your kids read to you in the car.** As parents, we know the importance of reading and helping our kids develop this valuable skill. Even if your drive to school only takes ten minutes, you can make those ten minutes count by asking your child to read a chapter or a short book. This adds quality to your time together and can be a fun way to help develop your child's reading skills. If you have multiple kids, let them take turns each day. Soon it will become a game and they will look forward to their turn to read.

- 71) **Get it delivered.** All kinds of stores now deliver for free or a minimal fee. Check out <http://www.Safeway.com> to save time at the grocery store. Costco offers delivery to many business locations: <http://www.Costco.com>.
- 72) **Hire a Pet Sitter.** Pet sitting services are popping up everywhere and aside from providing a great alternative to boarding your pets while you travel, most sitters can also take your furry family members to Veterinarian visits or grooming appointments and will even walk your dog. Visit Pet Sitters International to find one in your area: <http://www.petsit.com/>.

## Personal Time Savers

- 73) **Go to the bank from the comfort of your home.** Use online banking to manage your money and pay your bills. It takes a little time to set up initially, but you will never again have to sit down with a giant stack of bills. Online banking makes it easy to manage your budget and balance your checkbook and most banks offer this service free of charge.
- 74) **Don't let magazines pile up.** As soon as you finish reading your favorite monthly glossy, put it in the recycle bin or in a bag to donate to the hospital or senior center.
- 75) **Touch everything only once.** Avoid saving for later what you can sort, throw away or put away now. If you make a lot of piles at home and work, then you are already saving too many things for later. If you have to, schedule time in your day to deal with your piles!
- 76) **Leave yourself reminders.** Do you tend to forget items as you leave the house in the morning? Place a Post-it note on your front door with reminders to yourself or your family. If there are items that you need to take with you in the morning, such as a briefcase, book or outgoing mail, get in the habit of setting items by the front door at night to avoid the frantic gathering in the morning.
- 77) **Use an organizer.** Franklin Covey has cornered the market with their time management systems in the form of day planners. Consider getting a day planner, or if you are electronically inclined, a hand held organizer. The key to success with these tools is to use them consistently. Organizers give you a central point to manage your calendar, addresses, To Do lists, track expenses and keep other tasks neatly organized. Most electronic organizers can also be synched up with the contacts and calendar on your computer so everything is kept up to date and only needs to be entered once.
- 78) **Manage your wardrobe.** Do you spend too much time picking out something to wear in the morning? Organize your closet to increase your sanity. Anything you haven't worn for a year or more should be donated to charity. Put items you wear most

frequently in the front of your closet. Organize the rest of the items by separating tops and bottoms and then arrange by color.

- 79) **Get rid of it.** After you clean out your closet, tackle the rest of your house. Box up old toys, unused gifts, and knick knacks that are taking up space and cluttering your life. Call your favorite local charity to arrange for a curb-side pick up of your donation items.
- 80) **Decide on your weekly wardrobe.** Minimize the morning chaos by having your wardrobe ready to go. On Sunday night, select five outfits for the week and move them to the front of your closet for quick access.
- 81) **Find your keys.** Always losing your keys? Designate a bowl or shelf where you place them both at home and at the office.
- 82) **Visit the dry cleaners.** Spending too much time ironing? If you're spending an hour a week or more and resenting your ironing board, send it out. Your local cleaners will be happy to have your business and you'll be relieved to tuck that ironing board back into the closet.
- 83) **Get paid in time.** Instead of asking for a raise, how about asking for more vacation time or a flexible work schedule? Companies that are strapped for cash or bosses that understand the importance of family could be open to rewarding your hard work with time instead of cash.
- 84) **Take a mental health day.** When you've been working hard and need a break, take one. Reward yourself with a day to sleep in, read a book, get a massage or just relax in the backyard. Everyone deserves some down time and your body will appreciate a break from stress.
- 85) **Put off committing to an event until you've had time to think it through.** How often are you asked to attend a party by an acquaintance or you're invited to an event that doesn't immediately sound interesting? Politely give thanks for the invitation and offer to get back to the person who made the request after you have checked your schedule.

This way you can decide to decline if the event takes time away from your personal priorities.

- 86) **Manage extracurricular activities.** What activities can you eliminate or reduce from your schedule? Do you spend too much time in front of the television? Do you feel compelled to read the paper from cover to cover every morning? Do you participate in groups or associations out of habit and obligation? Try to compromise on the activities that suck up time by reading only the sections of the paper that you really enjoy or minimizing the number of television shows you watch. Reduce your participation in other activities as well and use the extra time for quality rest and relaxation.
- 87) **Keep a gift list.** When inspiration strikes and you get a gift idea for someone you know, jot it down in your spiral book. Even if their birthday or holiday is six months off, you'll not only save time when it comes time to do your shopping, but your gift will be more thoughtful. Pay attention when spending time with family and friends and notice when they comment on that sweater they've been wanting or how much they love the vase in your living room.
- 88) **Shop year round.** Save last minute gift-buying hassles by picking up gifts when you see them. Many of us vow to start our holiday shopping in January and imagine how easy your next holiday will be if you actually finish shopping by October. While the crowds are filing into the mall in December, you can enjoy a glass of egg nog and extra time with your family.
- 89) **Shop Online.** Do you hate facing the crowds at the mall? Or just want to save time? Learn to shop online. Sites like <http://www.Amazon.com> offer everything from books and music to home accessories and clothing. You can usually meet minimum order requirements to earn free shipping. Some other popular shopping destinations include: <http://www.ebay.com>, <http://www.Buy.com> and <http://www.overstock.com>.
- 90) **Manage your warehouse shopping list.** If you regularly visit Costco, Sams Club or another warehouse store, keep a separate running list (in your spiral notebook) of items

to buy on your next trip. Jot down when you are low on coffee, diapers or toothpaste so you're always prepared.

- 91) **Prioritize your workouts.** Schedule time in your calendar for workouts and treat those appointments as if they were important business meetings.
- 92) **Go to bed.** Your productivity plummets when you are sleep deprived. It may be tempting to stay up late to finish a project, but how far will it set you back the following day when you're dragging through your tasks? Stick to a schedule and get your rest. You will not only be more productive, but your health will benefit too.
- 93) **Get some exercise.** It's easy to let exercise fall down the list of priorities, but your body needs and deserves some daily activity. If you can't possibly find a way to schedule in time at the gym, at least take a few short walks during the day. Even a 15-minute walk can speed up your metabolism and give you a burst of energy. Force yourself to take short breaks and walk around the building or the block. Take your dog for a quick stroll a couple of times per day- you'll both reap the benefits.
- 94) **Stay out of the drive thru.** When you're in a hurry, fast food may seem like an easy option, but that burger probably isn't worth it in the long run. Instead, pack quick snacks like energy shakes, yogurt, whole grain crackers and cheese. You can even pick up a piece of fruit at most convenience stores these days. Try visiting a deli for a sandwich or soup.
- 95) **Listen to audio books.** If you want to read the latest trade or business books or even just a novel for pleasure, audio books can help you squeeze in reading time while you're doing other things. You can listen in your car, in a walkman while you're at the gym or while you cook dinner or mow the lawn. Check them out at the library or purchase from <http://www.audible.com> or <http://www.amazon.com>.
- 96) **Keep a report or book with you at all times.** In line at the grocery store or post office? Catch up on your reading! Waiting for your kid's practice to end? Finish up a chapter. If you're required to do a lot of reading for work, keep some of the materials on

hand and catch up whenever you have a few extra minutes to spare or keep a magazine or book handy to steal a few minutes of pleasure reading.

97) **Make two lists- one for things you want from life and one of things you need.**

When a time sucking offer comes your way, ask yourself if it's something that meets your wants or your needs? If it's purely obligation or doesn't fit in with the priorities in your life, keep it off your To Do list.

98) **Remember the most important relationships in your life.**

Time passes quickly and it's easy to forget to watch your kids grow up, spend time with your aging parents or touch base your best buddy. These people should be on your priority list and if you have to, schedule in the time to spend with them—they don't even have to know about your schedule, but they will appreciate the effort.

99) **Make time management part of your lifestyle.**

Experts tell us that it takes 21 days to create a habit. Stick to your new time management strategies for just a few weeks and you'll soon be in a new groove. The same way that you remember to brush your teeth and shower each morning, you can make time management strategies part of your daily routine.

100) **Get support.**

Involve your coworkers, friends and family when you begin taking your time management seriously. Let them all know about your new schedule and that you need their support to make it work.

101) **Most important of all, don't forget to allow time for yourself.**

We all need and deserve a slice of time each day to read, take a bath, play a game or just enjoy some peace and quiet. Make this a regular part of your routine and you will achieve balance and harmony in all areas of your busy life.

By now you should have plenty of ideas for making your life more efficient and manageable. Remember to implement them slowly and avoid trying to tackle all of these suggestions like another To Do list. The point of all this is to avoid overwhelming yourself and to begin changing some of your habits. Soon you should see dramatic changes in your productivity and the overall quality of your life.

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### **About the Author:**

Stephanie Chandler is a small business expert and the author of *From Entrepreneur to Infopreneur: Make Money with Books, eBooks and Information Products* and *The Business Startup Checklist and Planning Guide: Seize Your Entrepreneurial Dreams!*

Chandler is also the founder of <http://www.BusinessInfoGuide.com>, a directory of free resources for entrepreneurs. Subscribe to the newsletter for hot tips and resources!



Need help with your electronic newsletter or Web site copy? Visit Chandler's other business: <http://www.ProPublishingServices.com>. Her team of talented writers can help you generate more profits for your business!

Good luck with your time management goals and may you enjoy your new found time and some peace of mind!